

CHESTER DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS South Branch

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – ACTON

19TH November 2016.

CHAIRMAN: Mary Pickstone:

PRESENT: 44 members.

Towers represented: Acton, Alsager, Bunbury, Church Lawton, Congleton, Crewe, Goostrey, Holmes Chapel, Nantwich, Sandbach, Wistaston, and Wybunbury.

John Gibb proposed a vote of thanks to our President, Rev. Stephen Snelling for taking the service, and to Hilda Mottram for playing the organ. He also thanked Zoe, Carol and Heather along with other Acton ringers for their delicious tea.

MINUTES 2015 AGM:

The Minutes of the previous AGM were agreed and accepted unanimously – there were no matters arising,

CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS:

The Chairman felt that most of her thoughts would be covered in the Agenda, however she thanked the Committee for their hard work and commitment, and the members for their support throughout the past year.

NEW MEMBERS:

There was one new member nominated for Guild membership from Bunbury: Peter Jones, proposed by David Riley and seconded by Mike Hodge.

PHILLIP BOOTE SHIELD:

The Committee unanimously agreed that this be awarded to Tom Nestor for his hard work and commitment moving forward the project to get the bells of Christ Church Crewe ringing again.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Shirley Vernon:

The Treasurer reported a loss of 25 members - The balance for 2015 was £2993. and for 2016 is £3058, an increase of £65 of which £35 is "ring-fenced" against possible outing loss.

These accounts have been audited and found to be correct.

The accounts were proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Denis Taylor, and unanimously accepted by the meeting.

The cause of the reduction in numbers was discussed along with ways of encouraging recruitment

- Peter Lawrence thought that the Heritage Day may have generated some interest.

David Riley asked for the criteria for Guild membership – this seems variable and is not specified in the Guild rules – the Guild representatives will query this at the next Guild meeting.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Mary Stanwell:

I am again very happy to report another busy year for the Branch and our average attendance at meetings remains steady at around 30.

The January walk continues to go from strength to strength – this year was at Daresbury where the ringing and lunch were followed by a somewhat chilly walk with occasional flurries of snow.

In May we went to Lytham St. Annes – the weather was kind and the ringing excellent and there was much of interest for non-ringers in the town. We finished at Preston Minster followed by a very good meal at a local pub.

The 6-bell competition was moved to June this year in order to be closer to the Guild Festival in September, and the plan is to do the same again next year - Holmes Chapel were worthy winners and went on to represent us at the Guild at Hoole.

Church Lawton were hosts to the Guild 8-bell in July – a lovely sunny day and a great setting for the competition – our thanks to Harold, and Rev. Steve Clapham for their hospitality.

In September Edd organised a great evening outing with ringing at Rostherne and Warburton and the obligatory pub meal – again good bells, beautiful sunshine and an idyllic setting.

The only meeting with poor attendance was Sandbach in October – a great shame as the bells are lovely but sadly the vicar was reduced to giving his service to only five ringers. Most embarrassing!! Several reasons have been put forward for this and I would welcome any further comments and suggestions for future planning.

At Guild level, there has been some criticism of the Logo used on the polo shirts and it was decided to ask all members for their ideas. A competition was suggested and a letter has been circulated to this end giving further details.

The 2017 programme is almost complete, and will be circulated very shortly - I sincerely hope you will all continue to support your Branch and encourage members not present, to do so.

As a Committee we do try to plan meetings that will be enjoyed by all but as I have already said, your Ringing masters or myself would be very pleased to hear your thoughts.

Finally my thanks to the Committee and all members who support us through the year.

RINGING MASTER'S REPORT: Peter Lawrence:

Roving practices visited both 6 and 8-bell towers and have continued to be well attended; generally achieving in excess of 10 ringers. The meetings continue to cater for ringers of all levels, and hopefully have provided useful opportunities for all who attend. Thank you to all who have attended and I hope you have found these practices good fun. Although these have sometimes been attended by local ringers, I am concerned that these meetings are not always helpful to the local band and would like to suggest that in the coming year we hold these practices on days that don't interfere with normal weekly practices. Consequently, I would like to hear from any Tower Captains who would be prepared to host for a district practice at their tower in the first week of the month on an alternative occasion to their practice night.

The district heat of the 6-bell striking competition was held at Wybunbury on 18th June with teams competing from Holmes Chapel, Nantwich, Wistaston and a scratch band. Unfortunately Church Lawton and Congleton, who have entered bands in past years, were unable to enter, in part due to insufficient ringers being available on the day. My thanks go to Phil Gay from the North Staffordshire Association for judging the heat, which was won by Holmes Chapel with 24 faults ahead of Nantwich who came second with 35 faults. I was pleased that Wistaston entered a band this year and hope that their example encourages other towers to enter this district competition. My thanks go to the Holmes Chapel band who went on to represent the branch in the Guild striking competition held at Hoole (Chester Branch) on the 24th September and achieved a creditable 3rd place out of 5.. The band comprised; John Murfin, David Phillips, Bill Hall, Jonathan Copley, Mervyn Harrison and George Robey.

The 8-bell striking competition was held in this branch at Church Lawton on the 9th July. The test piece was an interesting touch of 148 changes of Stedman triples, and was introduced into the roving district practices shortly after being announced and consequently has been attempted by many ringers in the district. The district team was selected after several special practised and comprised; Nicola Basford, George Basford, Mervyn Harrison, Bill Hall, David Farrar, Harold Dowler, Bill Humphries and myself. Despite ringing the test piece successfully many times in the practices the band fired out in the competition and consequently were not placed. The competition was won by Mid Branch. Although disappointed in our result, I would like to thank all of the ringers in the team and those who helped by supporting the special practices and the hope that we can improve on this outcome in the competition next year.

This has been a difficult year for personal reasons and consequently I have not been able to attend many of the district meetings nor provide training opportunities that I hoped to run. I would like to thank Bill Hall who joined me as ringing master in March, together with various people who helped when I was unavailable. I am also indebted to Tom Nestor who introduced some advanced minor practices at Goostrey – these received positive feedback from those who attended. Based on their success I suggest that further advanced minor and major practices are included in the programme for next year.

I would also like to thank the district officers for their advice, encouragement and support throughout the year

GUILD REPORT: Caroline Beckett:

As Guild Representative for the South Branch I have attended the three committee meetings over the year and the AGM in September at Hoole.

The AGM saw the election of a new Master of the Guild, Ben Kellett from Malpas, a new Peal Recorder, David Jones, and four Central Council reps for the next three years who are David Jones, Peter Wilkinson and two from the South Branch, Mike Orme and Stefan Zientek.

Through the Bell Restoration Fund the Guild has supported a number of different towers financially by providing grants to help them with their projects. Installing the Bollington bells at Stockton Heath has been an ongoing large project which is now nearing completion. The bells have been blessed and installed and ringing should be commencing soon (if it has not already done so) with a service of dedication by the Bishop of Chester on 8 January 2017. A local band is being trained in other towers. Smaller grants have been made over the year to Astbury (to quarter turn the 7th and refurbish the bearings £450, Tarvin (work on the clappers £400), Tilson (to rebush the clappers £160) and Malpas (rebushing clappers, replacing gudgeons and repainting the frame £1750).

Over the year a variety of topics have been discussed at the Guild Committee meetings. There has been some discussion around the Annual Report as it was generally thought that although every member is entitled to a copy they were often unwanted and wasted. To try and reduce the printing costs Branch Secretaries were asked to find out how many copies were required from each tower. It was agreed that unless you have actually declined your copy then you will receive one as stated in the rules. However we are hoping that over time the numbers required to be published will be reduced and if you do not require a copy this is an excellent time to inform your Branch Secretary. Having a copy online has been discussed but the issues surrounding data protection do not make this a possible option at present.

As you may know the Central Council voted at their AGM to initiate a review into the Council. They have set up an action group called CRAG and Stefan Zientek is a member. Information has been published in the Ringing World and feedback on the future role of the Council and ringing has been sought by the group.

Another important action of the committee has been to elect a new Press Officer, Tom Nestor, another South Branch ringer from Goostrey. He was co-opted on to the committee in June and has been working hard for the Guild ever since. He was instrumental with Stefan Zientek on producing a new design polo shirt so that they were ready for the Cheshire Show. Fifty were ordered and all but three have been sold with £60 profit going to the Guild. He is also investigating the best way forward for a new website and also organising a competition for a new logo for the Guild.

Other discussions have covered safeguarding, health and safety and also the possibility of a teaching centre in the Guild. The position of ringing at Old St Mary's in Chester and the ownership and maintenance of the bells has been raised by David Adams and ringing at Crewe has also been on the agenda and Tom will be giving an update on the progress made here.

Dates for next year have been agreed - the 8 bell striking competition will be in the Mid Branch on 8 July and the 6 bell competition and AGM will be in the East Branch on 23 September. The Cheshire Show will be on 20th and 21st June and it was agreed that a subcommittee would be appointed to review how the show should be run in order to make the most of recruiting opportunities.

I should just like to point out that the South Branch now has six regular members serving in some capacity on the Guild Committee (Mary Pickstone, Mary Stanwell, Mike Orme, Stefan Zientek, Tom Nestor and myself) so if you want something brought to their attention please let us know.

Following the report, a number of members raised issues :-

- Mike Orme stated that some members will, and have already asked 'what do we get for our subscription other than the Annual Report?'
- A request for numbers of members requiring a Report had been sent to all towers in June – only three replies had been received. The treasurer suggested putting the request on the subscription form and this was agreed. The question of having an on-line version had been mooted at Guild level but it was felt that data protection would be an issue – also not everyone has a computer...it was suggested that perhaps an 'opt out' rather than 'opt in' might be a better solution.
- David Elsworth asked why the need for a new logo – Tom explained some Guild members felt we needed a new identity which could be used both on the polo shirts and the new website, as well as other events eg the Cheshire Show.

CREWE: Mary Pickstone – Tom Nestor:

The chairman said that up-to-date copies of the progress had been circulated and it would be a long, slow journey, however, it was moving forward, and tower access is now available through the CEC. All members have been kept 'in the loop' and the new incumbent is keen to cooperate.

Structural issues still need to be addressed, and though the holding repairs have been done, full repairs need to be done before ringing can be resumed. Peter Dyson is to do an inspection of the bells.

The Diocese have commissioned a study of the whole site ?? to contribute towards the cost. Historically, redundant church buildings have been sold and the Diocese may well query keeping Crewe. Tom felt that the Diocese may not hold the CEC to their responsibility of maintaining the building for bellringing as stated in the lease.

Rev. Lynn wishes to know what we want ie If it is to be a regional teaching centre, then who would run it - what would be the cost - is it a realistic proposition? Would it be better located in Chester?

She has been asked to form a working group to promote the formation of a cultural corridor which is from the Lyceum through to the Lifestyle centre – this to be produced by sometime in January. Stefan Zientek,

Frank Morton, David Farrar and our chairman have expressed an interest in joining the group and a meeting will be arranged before Christmas.

David Duthie reminded the meeting that Wybunbury tower had been bought by the village. This was not felt to be a viable option for Crewe.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

The present Committee had all agreed to stand again with one change – Nicola Basford will become Assistant Secretary. This was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

AOB:

The subject of providing a tea at Branch meetings was raised. The secretary explained that it was becoming more difficult and this was why 'bring your own' had been introduced in some instances though drinks were always provided. Rob Galloway felt that it would be better to have the two towers consecutively then members could either retire to the nearest hostelry, or go home – the members to be canvassed for comments.

Stefan Zientek suggested that the contribution from the Branch to the BRF be reduced and the difference be split into recruitment and development – this to be taken to the Guild.

Peter Lawrence suggested arranging a quarter peal week maybe in October – he also asked for towers to put forward any training needs.

John Elsworth proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 7.50pm

The next AGM - Holmes Chapel - November 18th 2017.

Mary Stanwell (Hon. Secretary)